

# **GROWING TOGETHER: VAUGHAN COMMUNITY SPACES PLAN**

**What We Heard Summary Report**  
**January 2025**



**Vaughan**  
**Public Libraries**



**VAUGHAN**



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# 1. Introduction







# Introduction

## About the Project

The **Growing Together: Vaughan Community Spaces Plan (CSP)** is a joint project between the City of Vaughan and Vaughan Public Libraries (VPL). Undertaken every five years, the CSP will replace the Active Together Master Plan.

Once complete, the CSP will guide the planning and provision of recreation facilities, park amenities, and libraries in Vaughan. Findings will be informed by insights from the community and other relevant research and initiatives such as the Greenspace Strategic Plan. The CSP will include short-term (five years) and long-term (to 2051) recommendations, taking into consideration the changing city and the emerging needs of the community.

Development of the CSP began in Spring 2024, with approval by City Council anticipated in Spring 2025. Community members will be engaged at key points in the process, including feedback on the draft plan prior to approval. The CSP is being prepared by a consulting team led by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants Ltd. and MJMA Architecture & Design, with support from the City of Vaughan and VPL.

## Purpose of This Report

Community input will shape the Community Spaces Plan, ensuring the final strategy reflects the needs and priorities of Vaughan residents. This report summarizes the engagement completed in Fall 2024, providing valuable insights to guide the development of the plan. While this report does not include recommendations, this feedback will inform future decisions.



# 2. Engagement Approach



# Engagement Approach

## Scope and Objectives

The engagement strategy focused on connecting with Vaughan residents and community groups to gather insights on the use of outdoor and indoor recreation facilities and libraries.

Using a variety of in-person and virtual engagement methods, we assessed community satisfaction levels, unmet needs, and expectations while also pinpointing existing barriers to access.

The overarching goal was to uncover opportunities for enhancing Vaughan's community spaces through a multifaceted approach that employed both broad-based and targeted methods.

- ▶ **OBJECTIVE 1:**  
Determine current participation levels and activity trends in parks and facilities to inform future planning and resource allocation.
- ▶ **OBJECTIVE 2:**  
Assess community satisfaction levels with current services, facilities, and parks, aiming to understand existing strengths.
- ▶ **OBJECTIVE 3:**  
Evaluate challenges with existing facilities and parks, aiming to identify improvement needs and enhancement opportunities based on community feedback.
- ▶ **OBJECTIVE 4:**  
Identify barriers to participation, including issues related to accessibility, affordability, and equity, seeking to understand challenges faced by residents and potential solutions.





## How We Engaged

A range of digital and in-person strategies and tools were employed to promote engagement opportunities (Fall 2024), ensuring widespread outreach and inclusion. This approach aimed to connect with Vaughan's diverse community and foster meaningful participation.

### Engagement Tactics

To engage the public and ensure a diversity of voices were captured, the following tools and methods were used:



#### Online Survey

An online survey ran from September 9th to the 18th to collect input on Vaughan's public spaces. Hard copy surveys were also available.



#### Phone Survey

A statistically significant phone survey was conducted from September 9th to the 23rd, providing residents an additional way to share their feedback and ensuring a broad range of voices were heard.



#### Community and Youth Pop-Ups

Two pop-ups were held in each ward (10 total) between September 28th and October 9th at libraries, community centres, and other public spaces.



#### Deep Dive Focus Groups

Virtual discussions were held to explore what is working well, barriers to access, identified gaps, challenges, and potential solutions for communities with shared interests.



#### Advisory Committees

Input was solicited from the VPL Board and several Vaughan Advisory Committees to learn more about how the CSP can advance overall community objectives and align with related initiatives.

### Outreach Methods

To introduce the project and spread awareness about the engagement opportunities, the following communication methods were used:



#### Project Webpage

A project webpage was launched and regularly updated to share all project information, milestones, and engagement opportunities.



#### Targeted Stakeholder Emails

Emails were sent to interest groups, stakeholders, and organizations to raise awareness about the project and promote opportunities for participation.



#### Social Media Campaign

Social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and LinkedIn were used to promote the project and share engagement opportunities.



#### Posters and Postcards

Posters and postcards were distributed at key recreation and library locations. The postcards provided an opportunity for people to share feedback.



#### Engagement with Indigenous Communities

First Nations communities were engaged to share information on the project and to gather input on key priorities that should be considered within the CSP.

## Who We Engaged

The City values the voice of Vaughan's diverse community and is committed to engaging residents and community members in municipal decisions that interest or impact them. We gathered feedback through targeted outreach, ensuring broad representation and meaningful participation. The following groups provided input during this phase of engagement:

### General Public

We engaged the general public through a comprehensive online survey, which received 431 unique responses. The telephone survey included a statistically valid random sample of 408 Vaughan residents aged 18 and older, with data weighted to reflect key demographics such as age and area of residence. To further broaden engagement, 10 pop-up events were held across the city reaching 581 participants. These pop-ups included five youth-focused events to ensure the voices of this important, but often underrepresented group, is included in the plan.

### Indigenous Partners

The Vaughan Community Spaces Plan prioritized Indigenous engagement by sharing project information with 12 First Nations. Three First Nations communities provided preliminary feedback, with opportunities for further consultation as the project progresses.

### Targeted Interest Groups

Six small, focused sessions with community members and stakeholders, including youth, older adults, equity-deserving groups, people with disabilities, sports organizations, and event organizations, were hosted to gather detailed insights on community members' needs and expectations.

**1,446**  
Total Participants

**431**  
Online Survey  
Respondents

**408**  
Phone Survey  
Respondents

**581**  
Pop-Up  
Participants

**26**  
Focus Group  
Participants





# 3. What We Heard





# What We Heard

## Key Findings

This section shares some of the key insights we've heard so far through community input. A full summary can be found in **Appendix A**. These early findings will help shape the development of the Community Spaces Plan (CSP). The following pages outline the main themes emerging for further consideration moving forward.



**61%** of residents have used a **Vaughan community centre, pool, or arena** within the last two years, with swimming (71%) being the most common activity, followed by ice sports (31%), gymnasium sports (26%), and fitness activities (22%).

More affordable fees and extended hours may be some ways to encourage people to use these spaces more often.



**75%** of residents have visited a **Vaughan park** within the last two years, with trail use (62%) being the most common activity, followed by soccer (27%) and playground activities (26%).

More park activities and support amenities (e.g. benches, washrooms, etc.) may be some ways to encourage people to use the parks more often.



**75%** of residents have visited a **VPL location** within the last two years, with borrowing books and other materials (72%) being the most common activity, followed by using the space to study/work (39%), or to read/relax (16%).

More physical collections may be one way to encourage people to use the library more often.

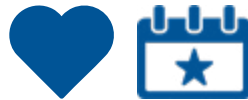




# What We Heard



The surveys found that people tend to use community spaces close to where they live, showing that **convenience** plays an important role in how often facilities are used. Residents indicated a willingness to travel about 12 to 17 minutes to use community spaces, depending on facility type. At the same time, respondents are **willing to travel farther**, even outside Vaughan, to visit facilities that offer organized activities or specialized sports.



People feel **safe and welcome** at Vaughan parks and facilities, and most feel that the time it takes them to travel to these spaces is reasonable. Community spaces also received high marks for their condition, maintenance, and having the features and amenities that residents desire. Participants shared that **more programs and special events** would encourage them and their families to use indoor facilities more often.



Overall, respondents reported **high levels of satisfaction** with parks, recreation, and libraries. Nine in ten (91%) survey respondents indicated that both Vaughan's parks and Vaughan Public Libraries are **important to their household's quality of life**, while 85% indicated the same about Vaughan's community centres, fitness centres, pools, and arenas.



Facility types receiving the **greatest support for additional public spending** are park washrooms (90%), playgrounds (89%), recreational trails (87%), seniors spaces (86%), and swimming pools (85%).

They also suggested that updates to parks, including more **support amenities and active features**, would increase their usage.



**Self-directed and unstructured** parks, recreation, and library activities, which are used by the most people, should remain a top funding priority.

The community survey found activities with the **highest levels of participation** (at least one member per household) to be public library use (93%), trails (72%), indoor swimming (54%), use of playgrounds (53%), and indoor fitness or weight-training activities (48%).



## In-Person Pop-ups



High praise for clean, cozy, and quiet library spaces and great staff, but there is a **strong desire for additional seating, larger spaces, and better study rooms** to accommodate diverse user needs.



**Ramps and inclusive playgrounds**, are frequently mentioned. **Safety concerns**, particularly around homelessness and maintenance issues in parks and community centres, are highlighted.



While adult workshops and youth programs like STEM and robotics are appreciated, there's a significant demand for **more interactive and diverse programming**, including mental health initiatives, music education, and better communication about events.



There was a desire for more **youth-focused amenities**, including dedicated spaces with unstructured programming and expanded sports opportunities, particularly basketball. More **family-friendly features** like splashpads, playgrounds, and camps are also wanted.



Fitness facilities, gymnasiums, and aquatic facilities receive positive feedback for their variety, cleanliness, and great staff. There is a consistent call for **expanded gymnasium hours, newer equipment, and better pool amenities**.



Park amenities are highly valued but some require **upgrades and improved maintenance** (e.g., sports facilities). **Expanded trails and bike lanes** would also help to enhance usability and safety.





## Deep Dive Focus Groups



### Youth:

Youth seek **unmonitored, affordable, and accessible spaces to socialize**.

Key barriers include distance, high costs, and safety concerns about travelling to community spaces (bike lanes, sidewalks, etc.).

**Better communication** about available opportunities and more inclusive programs are desired.



### Equity-Deserving Groups:

Concerns include expensive programs, limited family-friendly scheduling, and privacy issues in changerooms.

Communities call for **universal washrooms, subsidized options, and improved communication about available programs**.



### Sports Organizations:

High demand for sports facilities (e.g., soccer, hockey, pickleball) highlights **a desire for multi-sport hubs, better maintenance, and partnerships** to expand access.



### Older Adults:

Barriers for seniors include poor transportation, lack of senior-friendly facilities, and limited greenspaces. **Better digital access and personalized support were desired**. Older adults 50-65 feel excluded from senior programs.



### Events Organizations:

Simplified event planning processes and better promotion of volunteer opportunities would boost community engagement.

**Attendees felt parks need upgrades to host more events**.



### Accessibility and Inclusivity:

People living with disabilities emphasize the need for **inclusive workout equipment, accessible parks, and better-designed trails with ramps and seating**. Flexible facilities and programs that encourage interaction between all abilities are critical.

# Indigenous Engagement

During this phase of engagement, the Vaughan Community Spaces Plan team connected with 12 First Nations to share project information and inquire about capacity to engage. Three First Nation communities provided preliminary feedback, summarized below, with opportunities for further consultation as the project progresses.

## Representation and Recognition

- ▶ Display Indigenous role models (e.g., athletes, writers, heroes) with write-ups highlighting contributions and cultural resilience in community spaces.
- ▶ Incorporate Indigenous place names in community spaces.
- ▶ Commission Indigenous art and educational signage to reflect cultural and historical ties.
- ▶ Integrate art and cultural content thoughtfully to ensure appreciation, not neglect.

## Environmental and Cultural Priorities

- ▶ Preserve wetlands, woodlands, and natural spaces to promote sustainability for future generations.
- ▶ Use Indigenous flora (e.g., pollinator plants) and maintain clean watercourses.
- ▶ Create cultural heritage gardens (e.g., medicine gardens) to honour Indigenous teachings.

## Integration of Indigenous Knowledge and Teachings

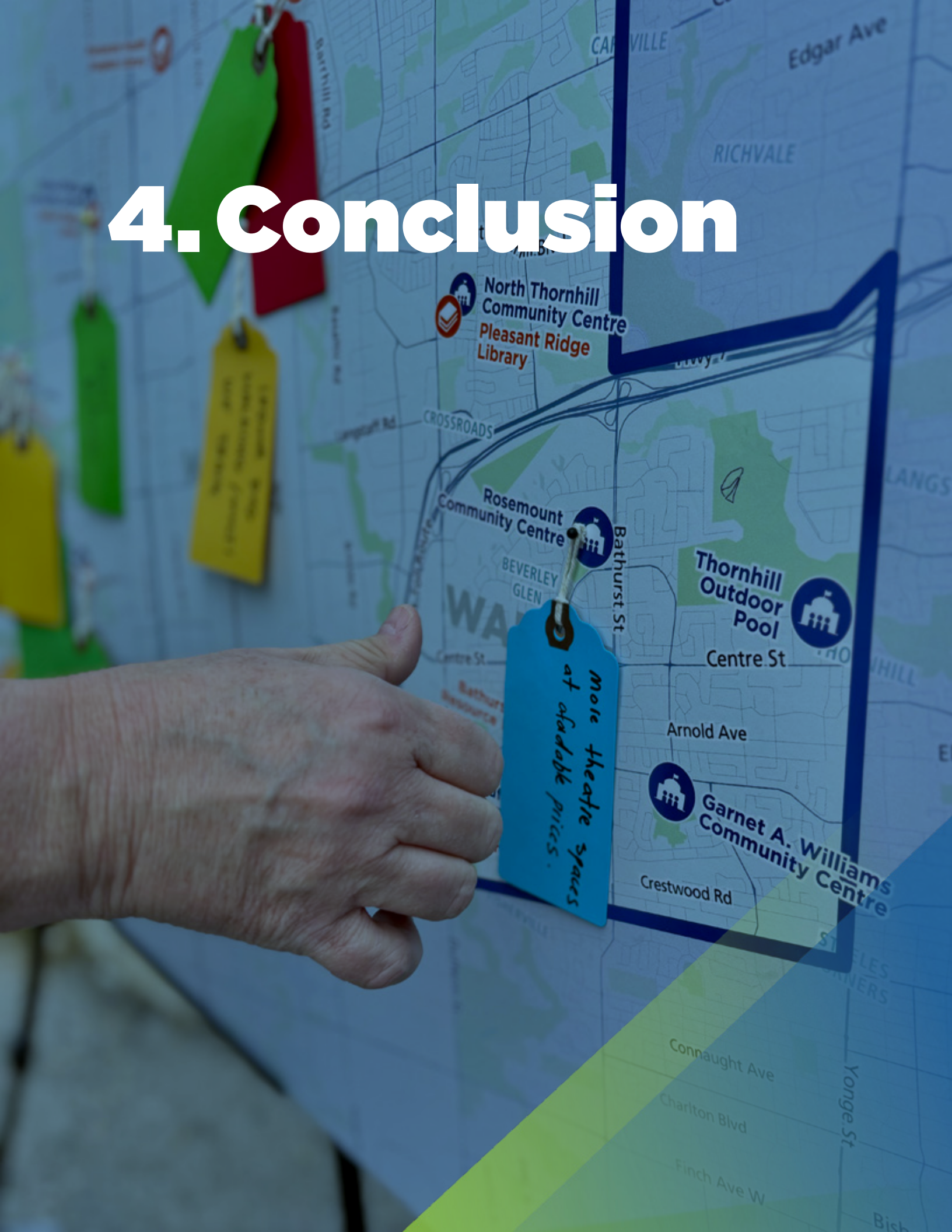
- ▶ Offer Indigenous programming such as medicine walks, storytelling, and craft projects using natural materials.
- ▶ Ensure teachings are led by appropriate Indigenous individuals or groups and compensate them fairly.
- ▶ Collaborate with Indigenous Outreach Coordinators for program design and stewardship.

## Collaboration and Shared Opportunities

- ▶ Partner with Indigenous historians and cultural leaders for educational materials and interpretive installations.
- ▶ Create spaces for urban Indigenous groups for ceremonial or cultural activities.
- ▶ Foster partnerships with diverse communities to build mutual understanding.



# 4. Conclusion





# Conclusion

## How Will Input Be Used?

The feedback gathered through online, phone, and in-person engagement will play a key role in shaping the Community Spaces Plan. This report offers a high-level snapshot of the feedback gathered. These insights will help guide decisions on facility upgrades, new programs, and funding priorities to better meet the needs of Vaughan residents and interested parties.

As the plan evolves, this input will ensure the strategies and recommendations reflect what matters most to the community.

## Next Steps

Thank you to everyone who shared their input—your feedback is invaluable. Stay up to date on the project's progress by visiting the project webpage:

[vaughan.ca/CommunitySpaces](https://vaughan.ca/CommunitySpaces)





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